“Placing” Community Connection at the Forefront: An Analysis of Allegheny Students’ Interactions With Meadville



By Katy Click

Department of Environmental Science

Allegheny College

Meadville, Pennsylvania

April 2016

"Placing" Community Connection at the Forefront: An Analysis of Allegheny Students' Interactions With Meadville

By
Katy Click
Department of Environmental Science
Allegheny College
Meadville, Pennsylvania
April, 2016

Submitted in fulfillment of the senior thesis requirements of the Department of Environmental Science at Allegheny College and approved by the senior thesis committee.

Benjamin Haywood	4-15-16	Wendy Kedzierski	4-15-16
Dr. Ben Haywood	**Date**	**Prof. Wendy Kedzierski**	**Date**

Katy Click
Pledge

Table of Contents

Abstract……3

Introduction……4
- Place Dependence……4
- Place Attachment……4
- Place Identity……5
- Place Meaning……5

Sense of Place and Its Importance in Today's World……6
- Sense of Place and Pro-Environmental Behavior……7
- Sense of Community……7
- Colleges and Communities……8

Sense of Place at Allegheny College……9

Methods……10

Community-Based Participatory Research and Photovoice……10

Procedure……11
- Outreach……11
- Participant Interaction and Coordination……12
- Focus Group……14
- Data Analysis……15

Results……17
- Participant Information……17
- General Trends from Focus Group Conversations……18
- Meadville and Allegheny College……20
- Photos……22

Discussion……22
- Dispersal of Sense of Place Characteristics……23
- Levels of Sense of Community and Connection ……24
- Photos……26
- Methods Comparison……27
- Meadville and Allegheny College……29
- Individuality & Unconscious Mental Connections ……32
- Allegheny's Contribution to Its Students' Sense of Place……34
- Limitations……35
- Future Improvements and Projects……36

Conclusion……37

References……39

Appendix A: Discussion Questions……43

Appendix B: Participant Photos……44

Name: Katy Click Date: Spring, 2016
Major: Environmental Studies
Thesis Committee: Ben Haywood, Wendy Kedzierski

Title: "Placing" Community Connection at the Forefront: An Analysis of Allegheny Students' Interactions With Meadville

---

Environmental degradation is occurring at an increasing rate, while incentives aimed at both industries and the public are exclusively monetary in nature. While monetary incentives are instrumental to altering the course of destruction in the current capitalistic structure through which society functions, negligence still occurs. Person-place relationships should be placed more at the forefront of incentivisation as a more honest approach with respect to the true value of nature and the benefits that the environment provides. Establishing a connection to natural spaces prompts the care and protection of such places, making person-place relationships vital to environmental awareness and protection. This project assesses the level of connection Allegheny College students have with the surrounding community of Meadville through the concept of sense of place and how this relationship may change over the course of time spent at Allegheny via a photovoice project. The end goal of this project is to strengthen ties between Allegheny students and Meadville, which will require future alterations of existing programs and the formation of new initiatives to engage students in their surrounding community to a greater extent. Ultimately, the intention is to dismantle the problematic physical and abstract divide between Allegheny College and Meadville, a divide that shows through and is replicated in the findings of this project.

Introduction

Sense of place refers to the relationship between people and their geographical surroundings, or spatial settings, in its simplest form, though it consists of several components (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001). The concept of sense of place was first developed by several geographers, namely Tuan, Lynch, and Relph (Tuan 1977; Lynch 1960; Relph 1976), though they have discrepancies when it comes to the subtlety of terms (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001; Manzo 2003). However, overall, they connect space to place while also addressing how ranges of experiences help build understanding and relationships with a particular place (Tuan 1977). The most vital distinction is that place is defined by the human experience, whereas space is simply the area devoid of meaning, which can be thought of as being similar to a blank slate (Tuan 1977); a space is not a place to a person prior to human interaction and involvement (Basso 1996; Cresswell 2004; Rose 1995). As more attention has been paid to sense of place, the aforementioned discrepancies amongst its founders have been clarified and classified into the following distinct subdivisions: place dependence, place attachment, place identity, and place meaning.

Place Dependence

The first subdivision of sense of place is place dependence, which expresses how a person can desire or feel a need for a particular place (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001). This dependence for a place lends to choosing the place in question over another place that offers the same service - the higher the place dependency, the less chance of exploring new places (Scannell & Gifford 2010). Over time, place dependency contributes to place attachment, since compounding experiences help to develop sentiment to a place (Herwerden 2015).

Place Attachment

Place attachment is defined by the bond that develops between a person and a place (Altman & Low 1992; Jorgensen & Stedman 2001). This bond can be measured in degrees, as it is “the extent to which an individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting” (Kyle et al. 2003), making it most commonly subject to assessment through Likert scales (Kudryavtsev et al. 2011). While place dependence addresses a person’s needs, place attachment addresses the person’s needs to a satisfactory degree that contributes to positive experiences,

which then contribute to greater place attachment in a positive feedback loop. However, despite the positive implications of place attachment, it has the potential to be associated with a negative experience, which occurs when a place is in conflict with a person's identity (Klenosky et al. 2008).

Place Identity

Place identity is closely intertwined with place attachment, but can best be depicted as the facet of one's identity that is directly correlated and dependent on his or her experiences in a place (Proshansky et al. 1983). Place identity can develop in any place that a person spends enough time in; it is not limited to a person's residence or immediate area. There is no set time frame required for a person to develop place identity, since every person is different and experiences and interprets the world around him or her in different ways and to varying degrees. Though there is no time frame necessary for place identity to occur, time is a major factor in relation to memories. The way a person interacts with a particular place may change with time, one example being a person's hometown, in which a person experiences at many different ages and stages of cognitive development (Proshansky et al. 1983). A place provides identity to a person at the same time as that person is projecting their identity onto the place through their experiences and interactions with that particular place.

Proshansky et al. (1983) also argue that identity is informed both unconsciously and consciously; the latter is uncommon in the literature. However, there are instances where a person chooses a place. One such case that conscious choice has been demonstrated is through racial discrimination, where people are excluded from certain places and must find and create a safe space (Manzo 2003). Situations such as these, typically associated with oppressed peoples, support the idea that people shape their environment as much as the environment shapes them (Manzo 2003). Personal backgrounds affect how one interacts with a space, and how one interacts with a space affects the space, which in turn affects how one might interact, thus creating a feedback loop.

Place Meaning

Place meaning takes a slightly more abstract meaning by referring to the symbolism that can be associated with specific features of places (Davenport & Anderson 2005). One feature,

such as a mountain, will not illicit the same meaning for everyone, once again due to the variability that the human race benefits from; Relph (2007) explains this occurrence as the meanings being the "property of human intentions and experiences." Just as with place identity, place meanings are influenced over time and are strengthened as the duration of time increases (Hay 1998). Taking on a multidimensional quality, place meaning is affected by social constructs, interactions, culture, and even politics (Ardoin 2006), making it a complex feature of the overarching concept of sense of place.

Sense of Place and Its Importance in Today's World

Identifying and being aware of people's sense of place in a given region is vital to the understanding and therefore the upkeep of that particular region. Regardless of the scale of the region, whether it is on a global scale or specified down to a particular place within a community, sense of place can be a useful tool in implementing change within the region. This change is made possible based on the intimate nature of the relationship that is associated with a heightened sense of place. Even a low level of attachment lends towards a more meaningful basis for proposing change, since it is still founded in the direct relationship between a person and a place, giving meaning to what might be considered a floating issue without much substance or argumentative backing. Genuine, more personal and expressive representations of people's thoughts and opinions stemming from the core concept of sense of place can create more suitable, enjoyable, livable environments.

In a world that is falling apart on many different levels, such as ubiquitous conflict in every shape and form, environmental degradation, and many other issues that permeate like a virus throughout the world and trickle down to daily life, much needs to change. Moreover, as globalization and a person's potential ability to mobilize have increased, person-place bonds are weakening (Relph 1976; Sanders et al. 2003; Sennett 2000). Place attachment, arguably the most vital sense of place characteristic that affects and aids in the strengthening of person-place bonds, lends to increased feelings of security in an individual, which has shown to manifest itself as less fear of neighborhood crime, as one example (Brown et al. 2003; Scannell & Gifford 2010). Throughout history, place and its importance and implications have been emphasized, most easily recalled for instances of war. Once more, place attachment is powerful enough to overcome a location as dangerous and chaotic as a war zone to instead provide a sense of safety

(Billig 2006). When it comes to improving elements of life, which is obviously a concern in our world, it is about the public, their perceptions, and how they mentally characterize places that truly matters and will factor into change.

Sense of Place and Pro-Environmental Behavior

Ultimately, people are motivated to protect places that are meaningful to them (Manzo & Perkins 2006). Sense of place encourages a deeper connection to nature and an awareness that might not develop without it. A study by Mayer and Frantz (2004) supports the assertion that a connection to nature will lead to concern for nature, which was an idea put forth long before the study was conducted (Leopold 1949). With this connection to a place that results in more time spent in that particular place, as examined through place dependence, attachment, and identity, a person is less likely to damage the local environment (White et al. 2008). Similarly, a person is less likely to harm nature if they feel connected to it, since such an action would also mean, in a sense, harming of the self (Mayer & Frantz 2004).

Environmental degradation has a direct affect on one's sense of place (Jorgensen & Stedman 2006; Stedman 2011); therefore, a stronger sense of place elicits positive environmental behaviors. In their study from 2013, Brehm et al. argue that because of the very nature of place attachment and meaning, a person can be predicted to emanate actions with the intent of protecting the environment, as places are valued because of their "inclusion within [one's] cognitive representation of the self." By internalizing and identifying with the local environment and issues within the community, people tend to exhibit pro-environmental behaviors (Ramkissoon et al. 2012).

Sense of Community

The importance of community ties cannot be devalued and are crucial to facilitating the establishment of person-place bonds, since communities are resultant of interactions that occur in space (McMillan & Chavis 1986; Tonnies 2002). Place therefore becomes an inherent, vital component for a community, and the interactions within a community also contribute back to sense of place; a person's place attachments and their sense of community are usually intertwined (Pretty et al. 2003). The beginnings of a community innately include places of

congregation, which makes it geographically founded yet also gives those places importance and reason for scrutiny and study (Wise 2015).

By definition, the term community can be approached by two different perspectives, one from a geographical standpoint and the other from a qualitative, relational standpoint (Gusfield 1975). Both are considered in the conceptualization of the theory of sense of community, which was first conceived by McMillan in 1976 and stresses the importance of four main, cyclical components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis 1986; McMillan 1996). Other studies have found the former and latter of these four distinctions, being aspects of a geographical community, to have a significant correlation to active participation related to the community (Talo et al. 2014). Forsyth et al. (2015) found in their study that such participation stemming from a stronger sense of community also links to environmental engagement (Agrawai & Gibson 1999; Theodori & Kyle 2013). Furthermore, sense of community increases with the age of the individual (Prezza et al. 2001); community engagement is exhibited to a greater extent in adults, as opposed to adolescents and young adults (Talo et al. 2014).

College Communities

The relationship between colleges and their surrounding towns have been problematic and strained dating back to medieval times, when physical walls were constructed as a barrier from townsfolk (Barr 1963). College towns tend to corral and periodically release tension that is most often based off of an influx of young students flocking to a smaller town or city (Kane & Roser 1989; Lopata 1986; Nichols 1990; Selland 1981), lending to the dubbing of these unhealthy relationships between institutions of learning and their towns as "town-gown" relations (Gumprecht 2003; Nunery 2003). Unconfined by the boundaries of the town-gown relations is the classification of different college towns. For example, certain college towns are thought of as stereotypical "college towns," a notable one being Pennsylvania State University, where the local resident population, owning the majority of the land and businesses, is substantially less than the student population (Gumprecht 2000; Sellend 1981). The two populations are, ideally, in sync to the extent that there also exists an interaction between the two populations where local hangouts are frequented by residents, students, staff, and faculty alike, though this idyllic stereotype often depicted in Hollywood films, where mutual, wholesome

dependency defines the relationship, is rarely seen operating effectively and ethically in real life (Nunery 2003).

Students' sense of place at colleges is also partially influenced by the notion that a college, where students are continuously coming and going, is a temporary residence. Relph (1976) divided sense of place into subdivisions of "authentic" and "inauthentic" to differentiate between long term residents and casual visitors, indicating the severity and importance of the division between the two categories in relation to sense of place. While college students stay for longer than a casual visitor would, the premise remains that their time in their college community is relatively fleeting compared to the rest of their lives; relatedly, length of residence has a positive effect on place attachment (Tabernero et al. 2010).

Tuan (1974) also commented on the nature of a person's interactions with spaces when temporary in contrast to those of permanent residents, stating that "outsiders" superficially evaluate an area based on appearance and aesthetic without understanding how the people there live, while Hay (1998) adds that outsiders do not develop the strong attachment that locals do and maintains that sense of place is directly influenced by residential status. Moreover, relocation and rates of mobility affects a person's sense of place, since established connections are broken and a person is thrust into a new location without developed attachment, identity, or the amenities to which they are accustomed, which can lead to mental distress in some situations (Cicognani et al. 2011; Sanders et al. 2003).

Sense of Place at Allegheny College

Currently, Allegheny College implements numerous programs and events with the goal of encouraging its students to interact with and ingrain themselves with the community in which it is located. These programs include Make a Difference Day, Service Saturdays, The Office of Civic Engagement through which Bonner and Davies Service Leaders work (which are scholarship programs), and a student-run club called I Heart Meadville. The latter's inception was after students noticed the bubble that colleges create in general, including Allegheny, and wanted a way to break that bubble and help facilitate garnering student appreciation for Meadville.

Because of the school's unsatisfactory reputation and relations with Meadville residents, this project attempts to understand the type and strength of connections that students have with

Meadville with the future goal of improving these relations through increased sense of community and place attachment. Not only will the results of this project help to better understand the general workings of colleges' relationships with their communities, it will also help to establish the conversation regarding potential factors that may contribute to a stronger place attachment of students to Meadville.

This project's results could help to inform new initiatives to integrate the school and its students with Meadville as well as the modification of existing initiatives. To continue blindly without an assessment of current conditions would be foolish; this project aims to provide a foundation from which to work from. Some recommendations are made, though a more holistic and better informed viewpoint should be achieved before fully considering any recommendations. Knowledge of students' sense of place in relation to Meadville in conjunction with what may have influenced or facilitated any possible interactions will help guide future planning directed towards dismantling the divide between Meadville and Allegheny College.

Methods

Community-Based Participatory Research and Photovoice

Photovoice is a method of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) that allows participants to use photographs to express and communicate their own opinions (Foster-Fishman 2013). To effectively assess participant's sense of place and connection to Meadville, I facilitated the conduction of a photovoice project. This method is conducive to sense of place assessment because it strays away from the standard empirical data that often dehumanizes results while also addressing the human aspect rooted in sense of place. Sense of place is purely personal; ergo, it only can be best determined and expressed by the person themselves. Instead of simply filling out a dull, empirical survey, participants are given cameras and asked to photograph either people, objects, places, or aspects of a place, making this method a place--based process because it integrates the community (Foster-Fishman 2013).

Sense of place is naturally connected to CBPR (Haywood 2013); furthermore, the benefits of Public Participation in Scientific Research (PPSR) are numerous: strengthened connections between people, nature, and place (Devictor et al. 2010; Evans et al. 2005; Fernandez-Gimenez et al. 2008; Overdevest et al. 2004), and increases in community building, social capital, social learning, and trust (Bell et al. 2009; Danielson et al. 2005; Fernandez-

Gimenez et al. 2008; Overdevest et al. 2004; Roth & Lee 2002; Wilderman et al. 2004), to name but a few. Simply by going through this project, students will be interacting more with the community and are taking an active role in scientific research.

Following the photo-taking process, participants engage in group discussions surrounding their photos, known as focus groups, where they describe anything from what attracts them to the depicted image to an issue they might identify in the photo. Results from photovoice projects ultimately are ideally presented, whether in a gallery or other similar venue, where the public can mingle to further discuss and combine thoughts and ideas represented in the photos. Because of this nature of photovoice projects, they are often used to address concerns or issues within the community before enacting change, as it fosters support throughout all members of the community.

Since the goal of this project is to assess student-community ties to set the groundwork for how to best inform the strengthening of those ties, photovoice was the most appropriate methodological option. Through photovoice, students' voices and true perceptions of a place are best depicted, as they set their own parameters and interpretations of the project, thus giving a more accurate initial pool of data. In many other research projects, such freedom is a negative outcome, yet with this project it was important to let students define their own "study region" of sorts and types of places from the given prompt. This aspect made for a more personal and therefore more accurate representation of students' level of connection to Meadville.

The data collected and analyzed in this photovoice project includes both photos and text. The photos are, clearly, derived from the "photo" of photovoice, while the text is the transcriptions from the focus groups, expanding more so upon the "voice" of photovoice. Resources utilized for this project were cameras (almost always from a personal smartphone camera) and a tape recorder, which was used in the focus groups.

Procedure

Outreach

To approach this photovoice project, I aimed to work with no more than ten students from each class (five to eight being the target), to whom I reached out to through various mediums. Ultimately, however, I ended up with two freshmen, six sophomores, two juniors, and three seniors, for a total of thirteen participants. After obtaining Institutional Review Board

(IRB) approval, I recruited participants by sharing Doodle polls for each class year accompanied by a brief overview of the project to catch people's attention. I reached out through a My Allegheny post, class Facebook groups, and a mass email sent out by the music department chair to all students in bands. After these preliminary outreaches, I was still in need of more participants, so I reached out once more through mass emails sent out by all building coordinators to their respective declared majors, through Professor Haywood to his ES 110 class and ES junior seminar, and by bumping my existing posts to the top of each of the class Facebook groups.

These methods were chosen to avoid as much bias as possible while simultaneously reaching the greatest amount and variety of students. Bias was not avoided in reaching out to the two ES classes, though one could argue that ES 110 is diverse and taken by many students of varying class years acquiring distribution credits and therefore is not too biased. The junior seminar, on the other hand, was more of a desperate attempt to garner more participants. Any participants resulting from this particular approach were noted and subsequent bias was included in the discussion of their results.

Participant Interaction and Coordination

Once participants signed up via a Doodle poll, I contacted them in multiple emails separated by class year. Availability of the participants was not taken into consideration, as I was in need of students and was willing to make accommodations to keep everyone who signed up. Each participant was blind carbon copied in every email so as to reduce any contact between the participants in the offhand chance that they might discuss the project amongst themselves, thus skewing their own interpretations. Participants were offered to either meet up to discuss the project in full or to receive all of the information in an email; meeting in person was stressed and preferred, though the email option was given in consideration and anticipation of students' busy schedules. Most students chose to meet up, and we would convene at a time and place that was most suitable for them. Consent forms were signed at this time and any questions were clarified, with the additional note that any further questions could be emailed to me at any time.

The most notable component in need of addressing at the origin was the picture-taking device, without which this project would be rendered impossible. I had made it clear that I would provide cameras for anyone in need so as to eliminate any selectiveness in students who might

sign up. Ergo, at this time, I checked in with participants to see if they would need a camera. Almost all used their smartphone camera, a couple used a real camera, and only one student asked for provisions. The provided camera was checked out from Pelletier Library.

The general prompt I gave to everyone whether via email or in person was as follows:

> *Head out into Meadville and take 10 photos of places that mean something to you. Could be a place you've only been to once, somewhere you pass by and appreciate, your regular weekly stop, anything. You set the parameters of what sort of place you photograph based on your own experiences. *For anywhere not in walking distance, remember the Loop!**

Students that expressed concern over accomplishing this task specifically based on a lack of experiences within Meadville were given the suggestion to photograph places that they have been to before in any context. Another concern of students was not being able to meet the quota of ten different places; these students were encouraged to photograph as many places as they were capable of doing. Inability to meet the quota would be considered in the discussion of the results. Also discussed during the initial meeting were the focus groups, what they would entail, and the time constraints of the project. It was initially planned for students to have a week to complete the prompt, but students ended up having between two weeks to, depending on the day of their eventual focus group meeting, nearly three weeks, meaning that more than sufficient time was provided. Updates on the project, such as decided focus group meeting times and designation of three photos, served as reminders so that during this extended time participants would not forget about the project.

Instead of meeting up with students to collect their photos, I gave them the option to email their photos directly to me, if that would be easier for them. Most already had their photos in a digital format and on their phones, so an email turned out to be the most sensible. This method facilitated my preparation of focus group presentations, though it may have limited students' ability to adhere to deadlines, since there was one less physical obligation. Once I determined the meeting times for each of the focus groups as well as for each of the students that could not make the most attendable time slots for their class, I emailed everyone when their meeting would be and made that the date to send me their photos by. A few participants

benefited from this extension, as they emailed me their photos an hour or less before their meeting time.

Emailing as a primary medium of communication was very limiting, as some students were incapable of checking emails consistently enough. Participants could easily not respond at variable points in the project and leave me with uncertainty as to their continued participation. In some instances, I had nothing to worry about, but in others, I ended up with less participants than expected. Despite the fallibility of emailing, there was no better method of formerly contacting and communicating with students. Texting could be an option for future studies, though this method could only be used if formality were foregone and it were not considered an invasion of privacy by the participant.

Focus Group

The culmination of my project was the focus groups, which were adapted into one-on-one interviews for some participants. Participants were separated by class year and asked to clarify their top three photos, otherwise known as the three places they connect the most with, before their meeting. Meetings occurred during the last full week of classes following Thanksgiving Break. All the photos for every participant in a given meeting were ordered onto a PowerPoint presentation prior to the meeting. Location of each focus group consequently was chosen based on the availability of a projector in addition to a space that would be more conducive for discussion. The ultimate location that met these criteria in addition to being available on Scheduler was the front room of Carr Hall.

At the beginning of each focus group, the idea behind a focus group was explained; open discussion regardless of whose photo was on the screen was encouraged. I also mentioned that the questions I had prepared were mere guidelines and that the participants should not hesitate to let the conversation flow to wherever it may take them. Each meeting was recorded with a tape recorder after participants were notified and approved of its use.

During the focus groups, I sought after answers to several questions for each of the photos (Appendix A). Questions were limited so as to keep meetings at a reasonable length of no longer than an hour. Most of the time, participants would cover questions without me needing to ask, simply letting their stories carry them through most of the details, leaving me to prompt anything initially left out. Following a discussion of the photos, I asked a few general

background informative questions to gain an understanding of each student's involvement, which could play a factor into their established sense of place.

Following the focus groups, I was left with hours of recordings. I undertook the tedious task of typing a transcript up for each meeting. Interviews were obviously separated by person, but the focus groups needed to follow a different pattern because of their interactive nature, which also led to some resolvable difficulties in determining the speaker in a few instances. By typing out a transcript, I was able to have something physical to analyze.

Data Analysis

Both photos and text were coded for different aspects of sense of place and, relatedly, level of connection to the community. An inductive coding approach was used because of the open-ended and unpredictable nature of the project. As opposed to highlighting different sections of text using different highlighter or pen colors on physical pieces of paper, I saved paper by completing coding with the highlighting tool in a word document. Each component of sense of place, following the denotations of each as outlined in the introduction, was highlighted as a different color to distinguish them for ease of reference (Table 1). Furthermore, whether the place was positive or negative from the participant's viewpoint was recorded for each photo, along with the type of space, whether natural or building/other (Table 1), and the overall level of connection the participant portrayed with the specific place. If it was unclear whether the place were building/other or a natural setting solely from the large expanse of the photo, text context clues were used to determine what in the photo was the focus. All text from participants' discussions of their top three photos were coded in this manner. Additionally, I identified outstanding quotes that were important to the theme of connection to Meadville by highlighting the relevant section of text and making a comment. With this method, I could easily and quickly locate them at a later date. Photos outside of the top three for each participant were eventually excluded from the analysis because of time concerns.

Table 1: Coding Criteria

Coding Aspect	Description	Example
Place Dependence	Functionality of place is stressed over an emotional connection, place chosen to address a need	“It’s a cool spot to just go for a walk and stuff. Good for recreational activities.”
Place Attachment	Exhibits emotional connection to place, place addresses needs well	“I just like going there, it’s fun.”
Place Identity	Part of the individual is indistinguishable from the place, and vice versa	“Pieces of my car is on that fire hydrant, and a piece of that fire hydrant is on my car, so it’s like I marked my territory. So it’s kind of my place.”
Place Meaning	Abstract meaning is associated with a place.	“The stained glass windows, remind me of my temple back home.”
Positive	Experiences and association are positive	“I quite like it.”
Negative	Experiences and association are negative	“Screw that fence.”
Natural Space	Place revolves around natural, outdoor features	
Building / Other	Place is man-made or includes unnatural elements	

Coding for the sense of place characteristics was based off of the literature descriptions of each; consequently, the unavoidable variability was the interpretation of the text and the chosen aspect of sense of place. Variability was also inherent in inferring the levels of connection for each photo and subsequently each participant, an unavoidable variable I had to accept when attempting to extrapolate others' experiences. Double coding was rarely appropriate and therefore was excluded to simplify the process, specifically in relation to the different aspects of sense of place. However, there was one instance of a place that was relevant to both a natural space and a building/other, and it was coded as both.

After tallying the counts for each sense of place characteristic per person and class year, I divided each by the number of participants in each class year to have an average per person count that could be compared across class years. In determining the level of connection students had with Meadville, aside from the general sense gained from the level of intimacy I achieved with the transcribed text, I weighted the four characteristics of sense of place to reflect their implications. Place attachment and identity were considered the most valuable in developing and signifying an emotional connection, then place meaning, followed by place dependence. By these standards, if place dependence were to outnumber all others, level of connection would be low compared to if place attachment or identity were the majority.

Counts of the sense of place characteristics do not include those linked to places on campus, since the focus of the project is on level of connection to the town of Meadville, not Allegheny.

Results

Participant Information

Despite the initial excitement regarding the preliminary influx of student interest, a total of thirteen students participated in this project, three of whom were unable to participate in their respective focus group. Two of those three were available for interviews and were of the sophomore class (participants 7 and 8), while the other participant, who was a senior (participant 13), could not attend the backup interview and instead included substantial descriptions for each of their photos in an emailed word document. The freshman class consisted of 2 participants, the sophomore class had 6, the junior class 2, and the senior class included 3 participants (Table 2). Gender and age, besides if they were at least 18 years old, were not among information asked of

participants. Gender was not incorporated for its non-binary nature and general lack of relevance to this project, which knowingly and purposefully is in opposition to the standards set by all prior work completed in the humanities. Age was also not applicable to this study, since time spent at Allegheny was the focus, to which a student's class year is more relevant. Only one out of thirteen participants' racial backgrounds was not white, a statistic that corresponds to the overwhelming number of white students at Allegheny College.

Table 2: Participant Class Years and Local Residency Status

Participant #	**Class Year**	**Meadville Resident**
1	Freshman	N
2	Freshman	N
3	Sophomore	N
4	Sophomore	N
5	Sophomore	N
6	Sophomore	N
7	Sophomore	N
8	Sophomore	N
9	Junior	N
10	Junior	N
11	Senior	N
12	Senior	N
13	Senior	N

General Trends from Focus Group Conversations

The most critical of information was a product of the focus groups and interviews. The text that was coded for characteristics of sense of place among other categories highlighted differences between participants' individual photos, each participant within a class year, and between the class years themselves at the broadest level of inspection.

Table 3: Instances of Place Characteristics by Class Year

Class	P. Attachment	P. Identity	P. Meaning	P. Dependence
Freshman	3	3	2	7
Sophomore	16	0	10	33
Junior	2	0	2	3
Senior	6	2	4	11

The characteristic that was coded for the most amount of times throughout all class years was place dependence. The freshman class had an average of 3.5 instances of place dependence per person, sophomores averaged 7, juniors 8, and seniors averaged 5.3, as seen below in Table 4.

Table 4: Average Instances of Place Characteristics Per Person for each Class Year

Class	P. Attachment	P. Identity	P. Meaning	P. Dependence
Freshman	1.5	1.5	1	3.5
Sophomore	2.6	0	1.6	5.5
Junior	1	0	1	1.5
Senior	2	0.6	1.3	3.6

Two examples of what was coded for place dependence is as follows:

"I go there a lot to get bread and other cool little dessert pastries. Every time before I leave for home I'll pick up something nice for the road." (Participant 8)

"I find stillness and calmness there. I find space to think. Space to breathe." (Participant 13)

This type of statement was very common throughout nearly all participants. Each student implied place dependence for their respective places by describing a need for something, whether physical or abstract, and indicated their place as favored over other places that can provide the

same service. The second most common characteristic was place attachment for all but the junior class, which had the same amount of occurrences of place meaning as place attachment (Table 3, 4). Generally, numbers for instances of place meaning were low, though place meaning was still more common than place identity. Regardless, there was a definite divide between the frequency of place dependence and attachment and the other two sense of place aspects, place identity and meaning.

Meadville and Allegheny College

Students with low levels of connection to Meadville chose areas on campus as their only locations pertaining to a prompt directed at the town. Thirty-eight percent of participants selected at least one on campus location to be in their top three. Other areas such as Woodcock Dam were incorporated into the expanse of Meadville for this project, enveloping outside of the typical downtown parameters, because traveling to such areas showed an interest to some degree of life outside of Allegheny.

A repeating theme was students brazenly expressing their lack of experiences in Meadville and occasionally stating their reasons for spending any amount of time in Meadville. For example, the following statements are examples from students and their lack of connection to Meadville:

> *" . . . I haven't spent a lot of time in Meadville, so I don't have a lot of emotional connection to the area . . . " (Participant 1)*

> *"I go to Walmart and the Market House occasionally, but otherwise I pretty much stay on campus . . . I associate Meadville with the school." (Participant 6)*

> *"Most of the places that I go to are just from running, I don't really leave campus." (Participant 10)*

> *" . . . most of the time I spend in Meadville I'm usually driving." (Participant 12)*

> *"I really don't go into Meadville that often, other than like, I guess I could've taken a picture of like Grace's, and that's probably it. Or like, Al's Melons. But*

like, beyond that, oh I guess the Market House. Okay so there a lot of things I could've taken, haha, but I would say that most of my time, like when I'm here, I'm on campus. I don't really venture out that much." (Participant 9)

These expressions and others like them across all class years show how important of a factor time is for developing a stronger sense of place; participant 9 identified a couple places within Meadville that they could have chosen, but they instead chose all places on campus based on either/both the overwhelming amount of experiences and time spent on campus as well as a potential perceived lack of attractions off campus.

Additionally, the identification of a divide between the school and the town is apparent and was confirmed by a few students:

"I do feel that there is a divide between Allegheny and Meadville . . . " (Participant 11)

"[A Meadville business owner] talked to us about like Meadville history a lot and how the college is sort of helping and hindering Meadville." (Participant 5)

While this response was not as ubiquitous as previous statement categories, partially because it evolved from the project as it developed and was only asked of those who chose to include on campus locations to photograph (which excludes the freshman class), the divide is evident in the sheer number of previously listed statements regarding the lack of connection Allegheny students tend to have with Meadville, even when students may not be aware of the divide. This finding supports the overall low level of connection that was exhibited by the Allegheny students in this study.

Involvement on and off campus (or lack thereof) from participant to participant was inconsistent with whether or not a participant's sense of place was strong or low. Participant 9 is president of the service fraternity on campus, has engaged in several Service Saturdays, and volunteers in town, yet they chose all locations on campus and declared a lack of time spent in Meadville (see above). Many of the other participants with low sense of place and/or who had chosen few to no photos off campus also did not have much involvement, if any at all.

Contradictions still existed though, as participant 9 is indicative of. On the other hand, participant 2 of the freshman class showed an adequate sense of place, though they did not have any involvement in the community at the time this project was conducted. Likewise, participant 8 had a strong sense of place but also barely had any substantial involvement in the community, aside from Service Saturdays and Make A Difference Day.

> *"Other than [Service Saturday and Make A Difference Day], I guess I don't find that many other opportunities to do stuff with the community." (Participant 8)*

Photos

There was not a clear pattern between frequency of natural spaces or buildings, with percentages within class years fluctuating. Focusing on the top three photos chosen by each participant that were discussed in the focus groups, the freshman class collectively chose 33 percent natural spaces that were off campus, sophomores chose 29 percent, juniors 50 percent, and 50 percent of off campus places were natural spaces for the senior class. Of the places identified as on campus, 100 percent were building/other in the sophomore class, 20 percent for the junior class, and building/other showed 100 percent for the senior class. The freshman class participants included no photos that were on campus. Participant photos can be found in Appendix B.

Discussion

The low levels of connection and place attachment exhibited by the participants in this project to the town of Meadville was expected, though the amount of students with a strong connection dispersed throughout the total participants was a bit surprising. An initial look at the data was slightly jarring and disappointing in that there is no irrefutable pattern that emerges for students over the years, whether intuitive or unintuitive, though that is to be expected with a smaller number of participants. The relationships behind the quantities of natural spaces and buildings/other both on and off campus start to align with the existing composition of Meadville and Allegheny and could become clearer with an increased number of participants.

Dispersal of Sense of Place Characteristics

The commonality of place dependence in this project aligned with guidelines set by prior research into the subdivisions of sense of place. Place dependence is described as being the necessity for a place and the selection of that place over others that offer the same service (Scannell & Gifford 2010); consequently, it is the most common because it does not require an established bond. This relative disconnection, as compared to place attachment or identity, is the central factor for why it occurs so often in the results. It is a basic fulfillment of human needs, which have an immense range and are inherent both on a daily and long term basis; humans will always seek assuagement for their needs. Place dependence is a sign of basic needs being met, though it is still an important part of a person's sense of place as well as a crucial step towards strengthening their sense of place. However, this dominance of place dependence may indicate a lower level of connection, as it revolves around functionality instead of involving the establishment of an emotional connection.

This distinction in level of connection garners more support when the instances of place attachment are few, which is the case for all class years. Though this result was expected in part because of the commonly-known poor relations between the community and students in addition to the physical divide between the two, which would decentivize too many experiences and time spent there, it is still a disappointing discovery. While the numbers for place attachment are more than place meaning and identity, they are still relatively low and notably less than those for place dependence (Table 3, 4). Therefore, emotional connection to the community among Allegheny students may be concluded to be at rather low levels.

Furthermore, numbers for place identity and place meaning were both low, which was to be expected as a blanket result at least for place meaning because of its abstract nature. Place identity, with its close relation to place attachment in that the time element is crucial for its development (Proshansky et al. 1983), would not logically appear too often for participants with lower senses of community and connection, as was the case for this project. All of its appearances in conversation were brief and isolated instances where the strength of the relationship with that place varied immensely between being weak or strong, while still being indicative of place identity regardless of the strength or lack thereof.

Place meaning was the other aspect of sense of place that was expected to have a lower frequency along with place identity, since it is also influenced by time and is shown to strengthen

as the time period of interaction increases (Hay 1998). This circumstance was also replicated in this project, with place meaning part of the lower, less frequent end of the division between sense of place characteristic frequencies previously mentioned. Place identity tends to have a greater effect on sense of community and level of connection, so lower numbers may also indicate a lower level of connection to the community.

Separating the traits of sense of place is important in understanding what sort of connections students are forming with places, which leads to the natural tendency to rank the characteristics of sense of place as some being more indicative of a greater level of connection than others. Though this project utilized the inherent ranking as a method, some flaws exist in this process. Since each aspect of sense of place received one count for each contiguous idea, numbers could vary based on a participant's comfort level or ability to ramble, thus repeating ideas in an assortment of wordings. Considering that there were two differing settings for discussion used in this project that each have a unique effect (to be discussed in a later section), assigning such power to the frequency of sense of place characteristics in determining a general level of connection is slightly dangerous.

Levels of Sense of Community and Connection

Overall sense of community and level of connection was relatively low for this project, by class year and by participants. However, there were participants that had strong and very strong levels of connection, but for every student with a strong connection to the community, there were anywhere from one to four other students within their class year who had no perceived emotional connection to Meadville, thus altering the comprehensive outcome. Less instances in the text that were coded for place characteristics, as seen for the freshman and junior classes (Table 3), could mean less willingness to discuss a place due to lack of talking points and less of a connection, though willingness and comfort with talking about a place could be resultant of methods, which will be discussed in a later section. The number of instances of characteristics, however, are intertwined with which respective characteristic is being questioned and its associated level of connection implications. For example, fewer instances of place attachment may still represent a stronger connection than greater instances of place dependence.

Less instances in the junior class can be attributed to the low number of participants, the same number of participants (n = 2) that are in the other class that has less instances of place

characteristics, the freshman class. Considering the small number, it can be deduced that there is not enough data to support any definite conclusions. While the latter of this statement is true of all class years as well as for the entire student body, it is especially pertinent to those classes with less participants.

This variance in the results where there are less data could appear to be because of randomization as an outcome of lack of sufficient data, as is considered to have happened with classes with the least representation, the junior and freshman classes. Nonetheless, the senior class only had one more participant than these two classes, and they also had a low connection to the community. Though this matter could still be because of a low number of participants, the senior class is distinct from the freshman and junior classes in that they show a greater general number of instances of sense of place aspects in the text. Ergo, it is more likely that their lower sense of community is because one of their participants included only places located on campus. Presence of lower levels of connection to the community is more overwhelming than absence of high levels of connection.

As mentioned previously, differences within a class year from student to student were vast, which was not necessarily an expected result, but rather one that is easily rationalized to the extent that it should have been expected. Once again, low numbers of participants hindered the display of patterns while inversely contributing to the variability and seemingly erratic nature of discrepancies between students. At such a small scale, individuality is more prevalent in the results. Individuality, while inherent in this project, is not desirable to the extent that it overwhelms and conceals any semblance of order. The results are more representative of a small part of a much larger whole.

Individuality can be accounted for and explained through each student's personal experiences; however, trying to discern any patterns becomes infinitely more difficult when there are disparities in results for one person. Several participants had a differing level of connection across all three of their top places, with one (participant 7) ranging from a very strong sense of community for one location to two others with a low sense of community for their on campus locations. This interpretation of the prompt to include on campus locations, which explicitly designated Meadville and purposely left the meaning of "Meadville" up to the participants for this very potential outcome, indicates that those participants may not have place attachment to any places in Meadville.

Moreover, participant 7 had other photos outside of their top three that were in Meadville, but they did not choose them because they had a much stronger place attachment for the locations on campus, making those places more relevant to them. While reasons may be inferred for individual participants within a class year based on a person's experiences and involvements and relatedly how they were introduced to certain areas (or not introduced), it is more complicated to distinguish the rationale.

Naturally, there will be places that are more valuable to a person than others; it would be unreasonable to expect uniformity. As the research and results have shown, duration of time spent in a place is vital to the level of connection a person has for that location, and it is nearly impossible to accidentally dedicate the same amount of time to more than one place. Even if one could do so, the type of interactions that they would have with the two places would still be fundamentally different. One explanation for the discrepancy in levels of connection to the community for individuals with a mix of photos on and off campus, specifically participant 7 and their situation, is that it is possible to have place attachment to places within Meadville, but not having yet been exposed to many other areas, not a strong overall sense of community. A strong place attachment in one isolated location in a community may play an important role in increasing exposure to other areas and fostering new ties to new places, though that concept is outside the scope of this project and may only be adopted as a potential reason for variability of levels of connection to the community in one person.

Photos

Neither natural spaces nor buildings as a category of location was prominent, with the junior and senior classes splitting equally between the two for their on campus locations and the other two classes averaging to over 30 percent natural. This slight selection for buildings is characteristic of buildings acting as final destinations in our society more so than natural spaces. Additionally, the school term when all students will be in Meadville spans across the worse weather months of the year, with about only a month of pleasant weather conducive to outdoor excursions. If the weather is undesirable and a student still ventures out into the world, then they would presumably prefer to escape the hostile weather by designating a building as the destination. Additionally, the weather is favorable at the beginning and end of the school year, the former happening when freshmen are not yet acclimated with the area and might not be

disposed to engage in activities off campus at that time. Alternatively, the end of the year would be an ideal time to explore and heighten one's sense of community.

For participants that chose to take on campus photos, all were designated as buildings with no natural spaces, with the junior class being the single exception. This result is both logical and illogical, since campus is composed of buildings where students will spend most of their time, yet it is also one of two dominant green spaces in Meadville along with Diamond Park. Weather is still a factor, even in the short distance of being on campus; precipitation is still precipitation and people rarely want to linger outside when such conditions plague the area, which also supports the connection to places that are buildings. Better defined patterns may emerge with more data from a greater amount of participants.

The junior class varied from the others because all of their on campus photos were up at Robertson, which was considered outside the realm of Meadville based on it being official land of the school as well as the lack of any community aspects associated with the area. Though it is slightly removed from the main campus, its primary function is to be the training ground for student athletes and not much more. Both participants in the junior class run cross country for the school; their photos reflected the amount of time that they spend running outside. The common practice area for them is Robertson, which coincided with the areas they chose that they had conveniently encountered by running cross country. Therefore, it is reasonable that natural spaces dominated the on-campus locations for the junior class. The prevalence of natural spaces also suggests that sport may play an important role in influencing a person's sense of place.

Methods Comparison

While this project failed to reach the target amount of participants for every class year besides one, this lack of participants also prohibited selecting a focus group meeting time where some interested, unavailable students could be excluded. Thus, the interview method was incorporated to accommodate everyone who signed up, which led to an unexpected divide in the results to appear between the two methods. Participants who engaged in an interview were more talkative and expansive on their thoughts than those in a focus group. Also, they had more digressions that sometimes lead to more insight for a place and more instances of sense of place characteristics. The established feel for each interview bordered more on a stream of

consciousness from the participants, which was evident in the transcripts as long paragraphs of text between questions or comments in addition to a greater amount of run-on sentences.

Meanwhile, the feel of each focus group was slightly different. The freshman, junior, and senior focus groups were more reserved and felt moderately forced at times, though remaining light and genial. The sophomore focus group was the epitome of what was not only expected, but desired, with all participants engaging with each other's photos and expanding upon different elements for each. Unfortunately, for the other groups, many participants were reluctant to provide more detail or elaborate on their thoughts. Because this occurred for three different focus groups, a participant's, and by extension the class year's, lack of place attachment can be discounted as a potential factor for reluctance to expound. Rather, the number of participants in each class's focus groups was only two, whereas the sophomore class's focus groups consisted of four participants. Though the differential is small, two people could change the entire feel of a room, suggesting that focus groups are most successful within a narrow range of amount of participants. Despite the two basic possible observed atmospheres between the focus groups, the flow of conversation was evident in the transcript text, which was much more segmented and for shorter lengths than the text from the interviews.

Another factor to consider surrounding level of expression in the focus groups, especially in terms of comfortability, is participant's prior knowledge of each other. Allegheny College is a small student body of roughly 1,900 students, making it inevitable for participants to at least have seen each other around, if they are not solid friends or acquaintances. Several of the participants for this project within class years knew each other, having had classes together, participated in the same clubs, or, in the most extreme cases, were in the same friend groups. Comfort with another person from previous experiences generally will allow for a sense of ease when talking with other people, which seemed to affect at least the sophomore class focus group. Conversational ease also varied on an individual basis, with some participants simply possessing an outgoing personality, allowing them to be more apt to express themselves. Occasionally this innate extroverted personality permeated to those in the vicinity, aiding those less inclined to share to feel more relaxed and to share personal stories.

Not only were there several established relationships between participants, but there were also established friendships between the conductor of this project and several of the participants because of the small, more confined environment of the campus despite efforts to keep outreach

methods unbiased. Having been struggling to garner enough participants, if friends who had discovered this project through means other than being sought out (which never occurred) were interested, they were welcomed. These established relationships also contributed to comfort levels, lending to a potentially more relaxed environment more conducive to ease of speech and general flow of conversation. However, this is not believed to be a factor in this sense, since participants who were well acquainted with the conductor both shared information and had a conversational flow to each end of the spectrum. The same gamut of outcomes was true for participants with no relationship with the conductor of this project.

Ironically, for a sense of place oriented project, physical space could have been an altering factor in the methods. Interviews took place in a small, closed off room where quiet privacy could be attained, and photos were brought up on a laptop screen. Alternatively, focus groups took place in a larger, still private room in Carr Hall, where participant's photos were shown via an overhead projector. Interviews were more intimate, with less space to the participant, than the focus groups, where an attempted discussion circle ultimately turned into something closer to a judge asking questions to a witness. Breaks in conversation in the focus groups to allot for travel time to the computer connected to the overhead projector to switch to the next photo were also a dissimilarity between the interviews and the focus groups that may have accounted for differences in the type of results.

From a positive perspective, focus groups benefitted those present by subjecting participants to each other's photos and experiences. It is in this respect that this project subtly promoted the potential for an increased sense of community for its participants through passive participation. Listening to others' stories and the exposure to many places that may be newly discovered in focus groups may incline participants to experience these findings. At the bare minimum, they will have gained more base knowledge of Meadville.

Meadville and Allegheny College

The divide between Meadville and Allegheny College manifests itself both geographically as well as metaphorically through symbolism, as is recognized and discussed in another Allegheny student's senior thesis (DuChateau 2015). Meadville is downhill from Allegheny and has an entirely different feel from Allegheny's campus, which is characterized by brick walkways and green space. Students are aware of the geographical setting in which they

reside, though most will merely recognize the elevation differential without becoming attuned to its implications. One participant noted the divide in terms of appearance:

" . . . even of the ES-y perspective of the fact that we have so much more green space on campus than the city of Meadville or the surrounding areas, which might be part of why it feels so different, maybe it is the brick pathways and stuff, but I do feel like there is a divide." (Participant 11)

In the fall semester of 2015, the college paid for new crosswalks on campus that are brick, creating the feel of a closed path, rather than a crosswalk, through streets associated with Meadville and acting as extensions of the brick-defined Allegheny. Furthermore, signs directing people to campus avoid Park Avenue and instead lead drivers around Diamond Park, the other green space in Meadville outside of campus. The feeling of Diamond Park is similar to that of Allegheny, which was one of the deciding factors behind its selection for the location of the Founder's House (R. DuChateau, personal communications, April 1, 2016). As one continues up the hill along North Main Street from Diamond Park, they pass the official Allegheny sign adorned in brick and the new brick crosswalks that are not present on Park Avenue, which, along with buildings unified through neoclassical design (R. DuChateau, personal communications, April 1, 2016), further cement the mentality of an area distinctly detached from Meadville.

The amount of students that chose on campus places in itself is noteworthy of the separation between students at Allegheny and Meadville. Selecting on campus places exemplifies the absence of chosen places in Meadville, which relates back to the participant's low level of connection to Meadville. Interpretation of the prompt was at their discretion to encompass and highlight the participant's selections themselves as an additional factor to their sense of place. Theoretically, a participant with a stronger connection and sense of community with Meadville, upon hearing the prompt, would not hesitate to understand and think of places in Meadville. Those participants with lower levels of connections, upon hearing the prompt, would sooner think of the places they spend more time at: places on Allegheny's campus. This reasoning of more time spent at Allegheny in conjunction with not possessing a connection with Meadville, resulting in this interpretation of the prompt, was referenced by several participants who chose on campus photos.

Participant 11, when first starting the project, clarified what Meadville entailed; more specifically, they asked permission to include places outside of "downtown Meadville" and identified Conneaut Lake as an example point of interest. After the eventual loss of this photo because of a technological mishap, participant 11 ultimately chose all locations on campus. The extremes of these two polar opposite decisions exemplify the lack of place attachment within Meadville, as Conneaut Lake is far from town and campus does not equate to Meadville. Instead, Meadville is completely excluded from the decision process, existing between both of these preferred options yet remaining more easily accessible than one.

Interestingly, of those that chose on campus photos, all demonstrated a strong place attachment in every instance; their connection with on campus locations were impressive and unique as a whole compared to the rest of the strong place attachments to locations off campus. Obviously, a student at college, especially a college where off campus living has been phased out, will spend the most amount of time on campus by necessity. This imbalanced lifestyle will lead to a stronger place attachment on campus rather than off, emphasized by the aforementioned importance of the duration of time spent in a place (Hay 1998; Proshansky et al. 1983). This imbalance comes naturally to any student that does not attend school in a college town, since there is more of connection (whether healthy or not) between schools and their surrounding communities if they are considered a college town (Gumprecht 2000).

Accessibility to places within Meadville was a critical concern, since inability to travel would not only severely limit participant's ability to capture any places they have a connection with, but would act as a barrier to connections being established initially. For this project, a participant's lower sense of community and place attachment within Meadville and inclusion of on campus locations may be in part related to a lack of transportation, though it is unlikely. Many participants owned their own vehicle or knew friends with vehicles, allowing them to travel to places farther away, as participant 11 had done for their primary attempt at Conneaut Lake. If one did not have access to either their own or a friend's vehicle, the Crawford Area Transportation Authority (CATA) runs The Loop, which is a free shuttle service for Allegheny students. Though The Loop bus' travel extent limits the places a person could visit, there is still no excuse for supposed inability to travel to town; therefore, lack of transportation should not have been a hindrance in participant's ability to mobilize and low sense of community should not be attributed to travel impairment.

Individuality & Unconscious Mental Connections

By the nature of the project, as previously discussed, the results are individual as a direct correlation to a person's individual experiences. This personalization is what makes sense of place so valuable yet so difficult to pinpoint and, by the same token, generalize in a broader study. There may be reasons that a person would not feel comfortable leaving campus, which then affects the way that they interact with the community, as Manzo (2003) discusses. Allegheny, while having its issues in becoming progressive as the world and its awareness changes, does have a multitude of safe spaces for many different peoples, as well as providing Safe Zone Training for students and faculty. It may be that an individual would feel uncomfortable leaving the bubble Allegheny projects as a barrier between it and the "real world." Whether in situations such as these or in general, repeated experiences may not be necessary for increasing one's sense of place within the community.

This extrapolation is founded on the concepts of nostalgia and the associated contentment. It is possible for feelings of nostalgia to envelop around a thought of a place not visited frequently, outside of one's residence, and potentially only once. For example, participant 2 stated that they could never directionally find one of their places again, though they associated a substantial amount of place meaning and general contentment for the place alongside wishes to return amidst their realistic pessimism. Also, alumni reflecting on time at Allegheny is likely to draw mental connections to Meadville, Crawford County, and other such indicators for Allegheny through the grips of nostalgia, even when they may not have had many experiences within Meadville or their place attachment and level of connection to Meadville is not developed.

Therefore, it can be conjectured that scale of area, within reasonable limits, might not be so crucial in thinking about memories linked to sense of place. Attempting to narrow down scope of areas in separate levels of place attachment detracts from the overall picture of one's sense of place. Confined to subsections of a larger community, one might show little connection to certain areas. However, their place attachment may still be strong for the larger area, whether or not that is dependent on experiences in a greater number of subsect places within the community. Alternatively, perhaps one has low levels of attachments that are widespread throughout the community, meaning that on a small scale they might not exhibit a strong place attachment, but the range of exposures to different places within a larger whole may liken to an adequate place

attachment on a larger scale with the overall community. Once again, it depends on the individual. The notion that moldable memories (as they are wont to do) and nostalgia could affect a person's sense of place by the breadth of an area in which they have a connection suggests that those principles are the connecting glue of sorts in the mind between distal locations in reality.

The mental merging of Allegheny and Meadville may also occur without nostalgia, but to a lesser extent. The two freshman class participants openly discussed not having too much of a connection to Meadville, considering that they had only been at the school for a few months, yet they both had all off campus photos arising from a literal interpretation of the prompt. Meanwhile, participants from higher class years, having spent a longer period of time at Allegheny, made little to no mention of their connection to Meadville, though each class year had a healthy representation of photos on campus. Their interpretation of the prompt included Allegheny's campus within the parameters of Meadville. This result may correlate to the mental combining of Allegheny and Meadville, though whether a trend of an increasing frequency of choosing to take on campus photos as time spent at Allegheny also increases is unclear from such a small sample size. It is also important to consider that there may be other reasons for the taking of on campus photos, which have been outlined previously. Regardless, more time at Allegheny generates more memories, memories that can be coveted and that contribute to nostalgia for times past, even if a student has yet to permanently leave the school. Following the same logic aforedescribed, a greater amount of time spent even if only on Allegheny's campus may still heighten sense of place in relation to Meadville, but place attachment would remain low.

While there may be a mental spatial connection that students are fabricating, most likely unconsciously, between Allegheny and Meadville from their time spent on campus, the physical and metaphorical divide remains strong between campus and town. Place attachment, level of connection, and sense of community of the majority of students may be assumed to be low. However, the idea that students, both past and present, may be associating thought with Meadville when recalling experiences at Allegheny indicates that the tendency is to eliminate the divide between the school and the town (at least mentally), which therefore designates the divide as unnatural. Although this mental unification may appear to dismantle the divide between the

town and the school, attributing experiences displaced from the town with the town is reminiscent of Relph's description of inauthentic sense of place.

Allegheny's Contribution to Its Students' Sense of Place

Currently, Allegheny has a few programs in place to help involve students in the community, namely Make A Difference Day and Service Saturdays. Other, less broadcast events include dollar admission movie nights for students at Park Cinema and French Creek Cleanup, the latter occurring only once a year. Although students are brought into town through other means, such as wing nights and drink specials at bars, the aforementioned ones are the only ones that are catered to students specifically and exclusively. The results of this project suggest that these initiatives are largely ineffective, with nearly every student saying either that they do not participate, that they have tried to but find the timing of such events unfavorable, or that they do participate but have not been able to find any other ways in which to be involved in the community. Among those that do participate, nearly all mentioned alongside that they need service hours for some organization, whether Bonner or Greek Life related. While needing to fulfill a service hour quota does not necessarily detract from the experience associated with the acquisition of hours, it may not always lend to as positive or fruitful of an experience as otherwise.

Allegheny College is responsible for fostering a better, stronger, healthier relationship between the students of Allegheny and Meadville. To not strive to do so or to try halfheartedly would merely perpetuate the divide between the school and the town, which does not go unnoticed by many in town. It is also equally crucial to take careful consideration into how to go about dismantling the divide with student involvement, since Meadville is too often already viewed as an experiment. The perception of students and the school is not generally a positive one from the community: "[they] talked to us about Meadville history a lot and how the college is sort of helping and hindering Meadville" (Participant 5, in reference to an interaction with a business owner in town). On the other side of the spectrum, however, some community members are thankful to students who assist through research and volunteer work. It is noteworthy though that the small grouping of students esteemed by the community for their volunteering help may generally have greater respect for the area and are less likely to be associated with the much larger mass of students who create discomfort and tension in the community.

Based on the results from this project, it could be recommended to adjust the time of existing events such as Make A Difference Day and Service Saturdays, since several students cited the early awakening times for the events as the reason they did not attend and, in some cases, never plan to attend. However, this approach would force community members that plan or benefit from these events to be subservient to the will of the students, which only exacerbates a dangerous dynamic and mindset. Another recommendation that can be made directly from the results of this study is to have more opportunities for students to become involved in different ways.

An interesting idea stemming from the literature's descriptions of iconic college towns is to design some work study positions to not be on campus, but rather within the community. Community members then retain employer status, and college students work beneath them while helping out, for a nice change of pace. Some might disagree with this model and point out the flaw that work study positions are located on campus partially to provide ease of access for the busy student. If this strategy were tested or integrated, limiting the amount of positions available in the community and leaving a respectable amount on campus would be most prudent. Coordination with employers in the community would also be necessary, which could help the school's image, depending on how well they handle communication and payment details.

There is also a need for greater transparency. How these aspirations are to be met is an entirely separate discussion which involves expertise in social justice and power structures. The development of a god complex or neoliberal policies are the last things that Meadville needs; therefore, how to approach implementing initiatives should be almost more important than what the initiative is itself.

Limitations

While this data collected is crucial and will still contribute to an increased understanding of students' sense of place and how it is formed, it is still not representative of Allegheny students as either a whole or by class year because of the smaller amount of participants. This insufficiency has lead to an alteration in the data which manifests itself as randomized and nonexistent patterns. Students are notoriously busy and increasingly less involved as the years have progressed at Allegheny, making it a struggle to recruit participants without bribery. Even once students agreed to participate, some even going so far as to sign the consent form, they

terminated their participation. The more difficult of these would-be participants did so without any form of notification and instead silently slipped away. Therefore, this study was uncomfortably dependent on students and their desire to surrender some of their time to this project.

Time was a gargantuan limiting factor for this project. Producing the text for the transcripts off of the recordings from the interviews and focus groups required a substantial amount of time, even for limited, sometimes shy participants. While more participants were desired and necessary for this study to carry more weight and allow for more accurate deductions, it would have been highly improbable to have attempted including too many more participants. Allotment of time, a rare resource, was predominantly consumed by the transcribing, leaving marginally less time to extract the data (which also took an inordinate amount time), interpret the data, and write this paper. Each participant, during either interviews or focus groups, talked for no longer than seven minutes, the average being five. Restricting time on this front to allow for more participants would have been unreasonable and a disservice to the participants and their experiences. Had there perhaps been a different method utilized without somehow compromising the personalized nature of photovoice, time might have been saved.

From another perspective, time also limited the scope of this study. Having only so many weeks to conduct the study limited the parameters of the project. Consequently, the results ascertained from each participant were confined to a snapshot in time of their sense of place, as opposed to exploring participants' sense of place at separate intervals in their college careers.

Future Improvements and Projects

Expansions upon this project could be numerous, including a much longer, revised evaluation of how students' sense of place changes over time at Allegheny College. While this project attempted to do so within a few weeks, adequate coverage of this question would require repeating the photovoice project multiple times with the same students throughout all their years at Allegheny. A disadvantage with this approach would be that students would probably catch on to the intent of the project, which could lead to different results than what might happen without that knowledge. Regardless, such a project would be a vast improvement towards attempting to answer this research question properly.

More intriguing insight could be ascertained from a spatial analysis of the participants' photos to see if there are clusters per person, within class years, or any trends connected to distance from campus, whether related to a single person, class year, or the entire participant pool. With enough time to complete the project, data points could be overlaid with additional data sets using GIS software to incorporate sociopolitical factors. To provide more data points for the suitability analysis, additional photos, such as the ones outside of a participant's top three in this project, could be included.

Another offshoot project could focus specifically on the factors that directly affect students' sense of place. This project briefly incorporated factors, yet did not indepthly explore them because of time constraints and feasibility. The ability to pinpoint the specific factors that contribute to a student's sense of place would allow for those leading initiatives to accomplish just that to be better informed. Better design and therefore better results rely on quality information.

Over the past several years, a multitude of students have remained in Meadville following graduation to work in positions such as Career Services, VISTA coordinator, and even mayor of Meadville for a time. A few also volunteer time to play various instruments in the college music department's wind symphony. An interesting study would be to interview those former students that have transcended to the adult world while remaining in Meadville to inquire after what about Meadville has enticed them to stay. This proposed project would likely also incorporate a photovoice method to also understand each individual's general sense of place in addition to the interview element. A similar project aimed at alumni in general could investigate the role of nostalgia in sense of place and feelings of connection. Meadville is a special place, and understanding how students grow to appreciate the area will help future relations.

Conclusion

The geographical and metaphorical divide between Allegheny College and Meadville permeates through much of residential and student life and molds the interactions (or, in some cases, lack thereof) both parties have with each other. These interactions are commonly negative and detrimental and, in turn, only feed the pre-existing stereotypes held by both communities. The results of this project highlight both the divide and the struggling relationship between the two separated communities, with many participants either choosing on-campus locations over

places in Meadville, outright stating a low connection with Meadville, or exhibiting little connection with chosen places within the town. However, that is not to say that there are not those with a stronger connection to Meadville, since a few of the participants frequented areas rather often and personally knew several people in town. These positive interactions, coupled with an understanding of the problematic dynamic between the college and the town, give hope for the future relations between Allegheny College and Meadville. One would like to believe that students want to have a stronger connection to the town in which they go to school, and it is hoped that increased communication and coordination with an emphasis on developing person-place bonds will facilitate a socially prosperous, healthy coexistence between the school and Meadville at some point in the future.

References

Agrawal, A., & Gibson, C. C. (1999). Enchantment and disenchantment: The role of community in natural resource conservation. *World Development*, *27*(4): 629-649.

Altman, I., & Low, S. M. (Eds.). (1992). *Place attachment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Ardoin, N. M. (2006). Toward an Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place: Lessons for Environmental Education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, *11*: 112-126.

Barr, S. 1963. The Republic of Letters: Town and Gown. *Journal of Higher Education*, *34*(6): 301-310.

Basso, K. H. (1996). Wisdom sits in places: Notes on a western Apache landscape. In S. Feld & K. H. Basso (Eds.), Senses of place (pp. 53-90). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Bell, P., Lewenstein, B., Shouse, A., & Feder, M. (Eds.). (2009). Learning science in informal environments: People, places, and pursuits. Washington, DC: National Research Council of the National Academies.

Billig, M. (2006). Is my home my castle? Place attachment, risk perception, and religious faith. *Environment and Behavior*, *38*: 248-265.

Brehm, J. M., Eisenhauer, B. W., & Stedman, R. C. (2013). Environmental Concern: Examining the Role of Place Meaning and Place Attachment. *Society & Natural Resources*, *26*(5): 522-538.

Brown, B., Perkins, D. D., & Brown, G. (2003). Place attachment in a revitalizing neighborhood: individual and block levels of analysis. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *23*: 259–271.

Cicognani, E., Menezes, I., & Nata, G. (2011). University Students' Sense of Belonging to the Home Town: The Role of Residential Mobility. *Social Indicators Research*, *104*(1): 33-45.

Cresswell, T. (2004). Place: A short introduction. Oxford: Blackwell.

DuChateau, R. (2015). The Hierarchy of the Hill: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Material and Metaphorical Forces on North Main St. Senior Thesis at Allegheny College.

Danielsen, F., Burgess, N., & Balmford, A. (2005). Monitoring matters: Examining the potential of locally-based approaches. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, *14*: 2507-2542.

Davenport, M. A. & Anderson, D. H. (2005). Getting from Sense of Place to Place-Based Management: An Interpretive Investigation of Place Meanings and Perceptions of Landscape Change. *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal*, *18*(7): 625-641.

Devictor, V., Whittaker, R., & Beltrame, C. (2010). Beyond scarcity: Citizen science programmes as useful tools for conservation biogeography. *Diversity and Distributions*, *16*: 354-362.

Evans, C., Abrams, E., Reitsma, R., Roux, K., Salmonsen, L., & Marra, P. (2005). The Neighborhood Nestwatch Program: Participant outcomes of a citizen-science ecological research project. *Conservation Biology*, *19*(3): 589-594.

Fernandez-Gimenez, M., Ballard, H., & Sturtevant, V. (2008). Adaptive management and social learning in collaborative and community-based monitoring: A Study of five community-based forestry organizations in the western USA. *Ecology and Society*, *13*(2).

Forsyth, D. R., van Vugt, M., Schlein, G., & Story, P. A. (2015). Identity and Sustainability: Localized Sense of Community Increases Environmental Engagement. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, *15*(1): 233–252.

Foster-Fishman, P., et al. (2013). Photovoice Participant Handbook. Michigan State University. Retrieved from www.systemexchange.msu.edu

Gumprecht, B. (2000). *The American college town: A research prospectus.* Unpublished manuscript, University of Oklahoma.

Gumprecht, B. (2003). The American College Town. *Geographical Review*, *93*(1): 51-80. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com

Gusfield, J. R. (1975). *The community: A critical response*. New York: Harper Colophon.

Hay, R. (1998). Sense of Place in Developmental Context. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *18*: 5-29.

Haywood, B. K. (2014). A "Sense of Place" in Public Participation in Scientific Research. *Science Education*, *98*(1): 64-83.

Herwerden, E. (2015). Picturing a Deeper Connection with Nature: How Photovoice Reveals and Impacts Sense of Place. Senior Thesis at Allegheny College.

Jorgensen, B. S. & Stedman, R. C. (2001). Sense of Place as an Attitude: Lakeshore Owners Attitudes Toward their Properties. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *21*: 233-248.

Jorgensen, B. S. & Stedman, R. C. (2006). A comparative analysis of predictors of sense of place dimensions: Attachment to, dependence on, and identification with Lakeshore properties. *Journal of Environmental Management*, *79*: 316-327.

Kane, M., & Roser, M. F. (1989). Issues and Opportunities for University Communities. Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities.

Klenosky, D. B., LeBlanc, C. L., Vogt, C. A., & Schroeder, H. W. (2008). Factors that attract and repel visitation to urban recreation sites: A framework for research. Paper presented at the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, Bolton Landing, New York.

Kudryavtsev, Stedman, & Krasny. (2011). Sense of place in environmental education. *Environmental Education Research*, *18*(2): 229-250.

Kyle, G. T., Graefe, A., Manning, R., & Bacon, J. (2003). An examination of the relationship between leisure activity involvement and place attachment among hikers along the Appalachian Trail. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *35*(3): 249–73.

Leopold, A. (1949). *A Sand County Almanac: With essays on conservation from Round River*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Lopata, R. H. (1982). Small Cities Planning from a Historic Perspective: A Case Study of the Municipal Response to Tax-Exempt Landholdings. Public Historian 4 (1): 53-64.

Lucksinger, A. (2014). Ecopedagogy: Cultivating environmental consciousness through sense of place in literature. *Pedagogy*, *14*(2). Retrieved from http://muse.jhu.edu

Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *23*: 47-61

Manzo, L. C., & Perkins, D. D. (2006). Finding common grounds: The importance of place attachment to community participation and planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*, *20*(4): 335–50.

Mayer, F. S. & Frantz, C. M. (2004). Connectedness to nature scale: A measure of individuals' feeling in community with nature. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *24*:503-515.

McMillan, D. W. (1976). Sense of community: An attempt at definition. Unpublished manuscript, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, TN.

McMillan, D. W. (1996). Sense of Community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *24*(4): 315-325.

McMillan, D. W., & Chavos, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *14*(1): 6-23.

Nichols, D. (1990). University-Community Relations: Living Together Effectively. Springfield, 111.: C. C. Thomas.

Nunery, L. D., II. (2003). *Reconceptualizing the college town: Urban universities and local retail development*. University of Pennsylvania dissertation. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com

Overdevest, C., Orr, C., & Stepenuck, K. (2004). Volunteer stream monitoring and local participation in natural resource issues. *Human Ecology Review*, *11*(2): 177-185.

Pretty, G. H., Chipuer, H., & Bramston, P. (2003). Sense of place amongst adolescents and adults in two rural Australian towns: The discriminating features of place attachment, sense of community and place dependence in relation to place identity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *23*(3): 273-87.

Prezza, M., Amici, M., Roberti, T., & Tedeschi, G. (2001). Sense of community referred to the whole town: Its relations with neighboring, loneliness, life satisfaction, and area of residence. *Journal of Community Psychology, 29*(1): 29-52.

Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *3*: 57-83.

Relph, E. (1976). Place and placelessness. London: Pion Limited.

Relph, E. 2007. On the identity of places [1976]. In Urban design reader, ed. M. Carmona and S. Tiesdell, 103–7. Oxford: Architectural Press.

Rose, G. (1995). Place and identity: A sense of place. In D. Massey & P. Jess (Eds.), A place in the world (pp. 87-132). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roth, W., & Lee, S. (2002). Scientific literacy as collective praxis. *Public Understanding of Science*, *11*: 33-56.

Sanders, S., Bowie, S. L., & Bowie, Y. D. (2003). Lessons learned on forced relocation of older adults: the impact of hurricane Andrew on health, mental health, and social support of public housing residents. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, *40*: 23-35.

Scannell, L. & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing

Framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *30*: 1-10.
Selland, O. T. H. (1981). The College Town: Some Effects of College-Community Tensions. Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan.
Sennett, R. (2000). New capitalism, new isolation: A flexible city of strangers. Le Monde Diplomatique. (English Edition).
Stedman, R. (2011). Is it really just a social construction?: The contribution of the physical environment to sense of place. *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal*, (8): 671-685.
Tabernero, C., Briones, E., & Cuadrado, E. (2010). Changes in residential satisfaction and place attachment over time. *Bilingual Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *1*(3): 403-412.
Talo, C., Mannarini, T., & Rochira, A. (2014). Sense of Community and Community Participation: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Social Indicators Research*, *117*(1): 1-28.
Theodori, G. L., & Kyle, G. T. (2013). Community, place, and conservation. In W. P. Stewart, D. R. Williams, & L. E. Kruger (Eds.), *Place-based conservation: Perspectives from the social sciences* (pp. 49–70). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Science+Business Media.
Tönnies, F. (2002). *Community and society*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. (originally published in German 1887, trans. by Charles P. Loomis).
Tuan, Y. (1977). Space and place: The perspective of experience. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
White, D. D., Virden, R. J., & van Riper, C. J. (2008). Effects of Place Identity, Place Dependence, and Experience-Use on Perceptions of Recreation Impacts in a Natural Setting. *Environmental Management*, *42*: 647-657.
Wilderman, C., Barron, A., & Imgrund, L. (2004). Top down or bottom up? ALLARM's experience with two operational models for community science. In Proceedings of the 4th National Monitoring Conference. Chattanooga, TN: National Water Quality Monitoring Council.
Wise, N. (2015). Placing Sense Of Community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *43*(7), 920–929.

Appendix A: Discussion Questions

Photos

- What have been your past experiences with this area?
    - How were you introduced to this area?
- What about this area stands out to you?
- What meaning do you associate with it?
- If you still visit this area, how often do you do so?
    - What about this area brings you back?

*If participant took photos on Allegheny's campus:

- What led you to choose locations on campus over any possible places in town?
    - Do you feel that there is a divide between Allegheny and Meadville?

Background Information

- What is your [intended] major(s), minor(s)?
- Are you involved with any clubs or similar commitments on campus?
    - ex. Creek Connections, ResLife, etc.
- Have you ever participated in community events?
    - ex. Service Saturday, Make A Difference Day, French Creek Cleanup

Appendix B: Participant Photos



Participant 1



Participant 1



Participant 1



Participant 2



Participant 2


Participant 3


Participant 3


Participant 3



Participant 4



Participant 4



Participant 4



Participant 5



Participant 5



Participant 5



Participant 6



Participant 6



Participant 7



Participant 7



Participant 7



Participant 8



Participant 8



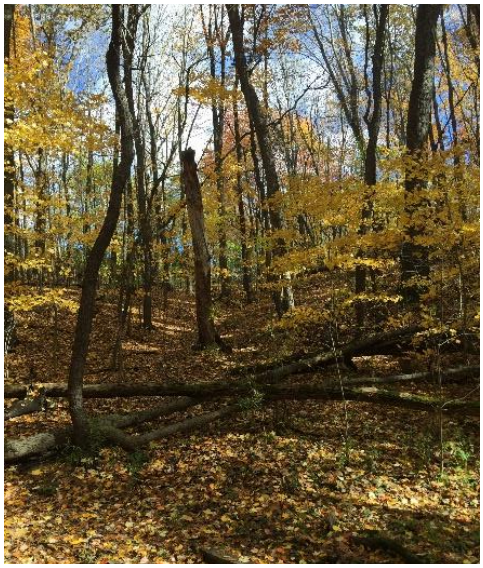
Participant 8



Participant 9



Participant 9



Participant 9



Participant 10



Participant 10



Participant 10



Participant 11



Participant 11



Participant 11



Participant 12



Participant 12



Participant 12



Participant 13



Participant 13



Participant 13